

## The Word and the Spirit in Faith and Life

AEMMC Mar. 12, 2011 Len Hjalmarson



Prep for teaching on the Spirit – oops! – impossible to separate from WORD

Which makes sense – TRINITY

Irenaeus – “Word and Spirit are the two hands of the Father”

The Word and the Spirit are the ways God acts in the world – and thus how we know God.

So where to begin – Genesis 1 \*\*\* Slide 1 \*\*\*

1 In the beginning / God created the heavens and

the earth.

2 Now the earth / was formless and empty,  
darkness / was over the surface / of the deep,

and the Spirit of God  
was fluttering / over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

4 God saw / that the light was good,  
and he separated / the light / from the darkness.

5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness / he called “night.”

And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

I’ve put the Hebrew on here also for the curious.

Reading from right to left – *Ruach ha Kodesh* – Spirit of Holiness

Ruach is equally translated “spirit or breath or wind”.

And the first thing / we learn about God / when we open our bibles / is that God creates.

And the agency of creation / is the Spirit.

“hovered” or “fluttered” are the same Hebrew word

And the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins

*Because the Holy Ghost / over the bent  
World broods / with warm breast / and with ah! / bright wings. (Gods Grandeur)*

And this is the picture in Hebrew – wings fluttering over the darkness

And then in the stillness / a VOICE “let there be” and there is!

And maybe we forget this about God --

God speaks – he releases his word – and immediately / things change.

From formlessness – there is form

From nothing – there is something

From darkness – there is light.

//

This picture goes from 2D to 3D / in the New Testament.

There are strong echoes in John’s gospel – even the form of Genesis 1 \*\*\* Slide 2 \*\*\*

1 In the beginning / was the Word,  
and the Word was with God / and the Word was God.

2He was with God / in beginning.

3Through him / all things were made;  
without him / nothing was made that has been made.

4In him was life / and that life / was the light of all people.

5The light shines in the darkness / and the darkness / has not overcome it.

Again – “in the beginning” – the same as Genesis 1.

Instead of the Spirit, we have the Word / active in creation.

“all things” were made through Him.

And in Him was <life> - the light of all people (the pronoun is neutral in the Greek)

And as in Genesis 1 “the light shines / in the darkness”

So the picture is the Trinity in creation: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And then following immediately from this focus on creation,

John shifts to a focus / on new creation – redemption.

V12 and 13 -- those who receive him / are born not of flesh but of God.

So we have God in action / as both Creator / and Redeemer.

What have we found out so far?

God's voice is POWERFUL.

When God speaks, stuff happens!

And the theology for most of this / is in the OT prophets – of course!

Prophets are people of the WORD / moved by the Spirit.

Jeremiah and Isaiah / are good places / to learn about God's voice.

Jeremiah 10:12-13

But God / made the earth by his power;  
he founded the world / by his wisdom  
and stretched out the heavens / by his understanding.

13 When he utters his voice, the waters in the heavens roar;  
he makes clouds rise / from the ends of the earth.  
He sends lightning / with the rain  
and brings out the wind / from his storehouses.

Jeremiah 11:4

'Listen to my voice, and do everything  
I command you, and you will be my people,  
and I will be your God.  
5Then I will fulfill the oath / I swore to your ancestors,  
to give them a land flowing / with milk and honey'—  
the land you possess today."

Jeremiah 23:29 \*\*\* Slide 3 \*\*\*

"Is not my word / like fire,"  
declares the LORD, "and like a hammer /  
that breaks a rock / in pieces?"

Psalm 33

6 By the word of the LORD / the heavens were made,  
their starry host / by the breath / of his mouth.

7 He gathers the waters of the sea / into jars;  
 he puts the deep / into storehouses.  
 8 Let all the earth / fear the LORD;  
 let all the people of the world / revere him.  
 9 For he spoke, and it came to be;  
 he commanded, and it stood firm.

This Hebrew word for “word” is **dabar**..

It really doesn't translate well into English.

**Dabar** means both word – and action.

When God speaks – stuff happens! /

God's voice in Hebrew is usually “dabar YAHWEH” / the Word of the Lord.

God's voice is like a hammer that breaks rocks.

This is why in the Psalms his voice is compared to thunder.

Remember in Acts when the Lord speaks to Saul / some said it thundered.

One of the most powerful pictures / of the work of Word and Spirit / is in Ezekiel 37.  
 (see also Dt. 6 prophetic formula “shema” = hear)

This story of the valley of dry bones  
 helps us make the connection / back to the work of the Spirit among us. \*\*\* Slide 4 \*\*\*  
 Ezekiel 37

The hand of the LORD was on me,  
 and he brought me out / by the Spirit of the LORD  
 and set me / in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.  
 2He led me back and forth among them,  
 and I saw a great many bones / on the floor of the valley,  
 bones that were very dry.  
 3He asked me,  
 “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

4Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones  
 and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’

The Word of the Lord - “Dabar YHWH”

5This is what the Sovereign LORD / says to these bones:

I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.  
 6I will attach tendons to you / and make flesh come upon you /  
 and cover you with skin;  
 I will put breath in you, and you will come to life.  
 Then you will know / that I am the LORD.’ ”

Ezekiel speaks – and the bones come to life.  
 And they stand on their feet – **a vast army**.  
 What is this all about?

What does it mean for us? / Let’s read a bit further.. / \*\*\* Slide 5 \*\*\*

11Then he said to me:  
 “Son of man, these bones / are the whole house of Israel.  
 They say, ‘Our bones are dried up / and our hope is gone;  
 we are cut off.’

12Therefore prophesy / and say to them:  
 ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people,  
 I am going to open your graves / and bring you up from them;

13Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD,  
 when I open your graves / and bring you up from them.

14I will put my Spirit in you / and you will live..

//

WOW!

Do you see what is happening here?

The WORD o the Lord is powerful –

But not ONLY when God speaks it.

It is equally powerful when God releases it through his servants.

Have you ever prayed for someone and seen instant change?

Have you ever felt prompted to pray for someone...

The next day or soon after you get a call – and everything has changed!

Maybe you didn’t even know what was happening –

But the Spirit released his Word – and everything changed.

Make it personal –

Is your hope gone?

DO you sometimes feel like you got saved – but you still have a foot in the grave?

Do you ever feel spiritually dry and wonder why faith does you no good?

Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD,  
when I open your graves and bring you up from them.

I will put my Spirit in you and you will live,  
and I will settle you in your own land.

Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken.

God spoke to dry bones / and they became alive.

He can speak his word and bring you to life also.

This is the work / his Spirit does – bringing life from death.

Bringing light in darkness.

God isn't active only in creation- John makes the connection for us

John 1:12-13

“As many as received him,  
To them he gave power / to become children of God.

Children born, not of the flesh, nor of human will, but born of God”

Hallelujah!

This is the work of the Spirit.

The Spirit gives life – the flesh profits nothing. //

Have you ever heard God's voice?

What is your experience of the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit is that person who brings God near. John 14 \*\*\* Slide 6\*\*\*

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you / another advocate  
to help you / and be with you forever—  
the Spirit of truth.*

*The world cannot accept him,*

*because it neither sees him / nor knows him.  
But you know him, for he lives with you / and will be in you.  
I will not leave you as orphans;  
I will come to you.*

Have you heard God's voice?

The first time it happened to me / I was minding my own business / lying on my bed.

I saw a picture in my mind, and then heard Scripture –

It was the new covenant -- from Jeremiah 31.

And then a verse from John 4.

One night Betty was feeling discouraged / and she suddenly realized  
someone was reading Scripture to her – but there was no one there.

*But isn't this very unusual?*

Do you remember what Peter says at Pentecost – he quotes Joel.. \*\*\*Slide 7 \*\*\*

*"In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters / will prophesy,  
your young men / will see visions,  
your old men / will dream dreams.*

*Even on my servants, both men / and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit / in those days / and they will prophesy.*

But do we really care about prophecy?

What we deeply want / is to know we are loved and accepted.

Most of us live part of our lives in fear of God.

Maybe we don't hear God's voice / because we deep down / we don't WANT to.

His voice shatters the rock.  
What would it mean to hear His voice?

When we were in Mexico on the Caribbean.. dipping toes.. suddenly aware of the vast ocean.

We may know God is good – we are aware that he isn't safe.

But some of us aren't even there yet – we aren't sure / that God is good.

What will it mean to hear his voice?

We remember stories like Isaiah 6.

Isaiah sees the Lord on his throne, and he sees the cherubim,  
Covering their faces with their wings..

And he hears them calling to one another..

*“Holy, holy, holy  
is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

*At the sound of their voices / the doorposts and thresholds shook  
and the temple was filled with smoke.*

One morning I was lying on my bed / and I saw a crystal sea.

Only I was looking up from below the crystal.  
And somehow I knew – this is the weird thing about visions –

In visions and sometimes in dreams / you know what you know  
but you have no idea how you know it.

I knew I was looking at the floor of heaven.

And then I saw great arms and hands reaching down..

Arms reaching down through a sea of crystal.

An invitation to lift up my eyes and enter the Presence of God.

There was no fear.

I saw the arms of my father, stooping to lift up his child.

An invitation – to intimacy. //

Have you heard God’s voice?

When Jesus is baptized he hears the voice of the Lord,

“This is my son whom I love, in him / I am well pleased.”

This is the voice of the Lord / and the Word of the Lord for us.

“dabar YHWH”

He says to us, “You / are my beloved.”

God’s voice is the voice of love.

The Spirit gives life what? *life more abundant.*

//

God is the Word – he is always speaking.

He calls us to listen. /

In the Spirit / God comes near to us.

One day years past I was leading worship, and as I paused between songs  
I saw a young lady standing about half way back.

I had never seen her before.

Suddenly I knew something about her / and I felt I was to say it.

So I told her that God knew her prayer and he would answer it.  
I told her that she was loved..

\ not ignored or forgotten.. and God was close to her.

I had no idea what this meant.

Later she came to me and thanked me / because she had been feeling deeply accused  
and that her prayers were not heard.

In those words - God came near to her by His Spirit

Jesus says in John 10 -

*“I am the good shepherd. I know my own / and my own know me.  
I have other sheep, and I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice,  
And they shall become one flock with one shepherd.”*

Another time someone was praying for me.

She said to me, “You are a Joseph – Joseph is a fruitful vine,  
whose branches run over the wall.”

And I knew it was true.

I knew she had spoken something / about my life calling.

This is the ministry of the Spirit – to encourage, direct, comfort, and challenge.

God did not leave orphans!

He didn't leave us / only His Word – a witness to the things that were.

He also left His Spirit – to walk with us / in the present / and to lead us forward.

And to bring his word to life in us.

The Word of God / is powerful and active / by the Spirit of God.

We don't talk much about these things.

Maybe we are afraid of pride.

But we rob the next generation of something important –

A witness / to a living faith – more than tradition.

And a witness / to a God who is powerful / and whose word shatters the rock.

/

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

It means to hear God's voice.

So often / we have reduced walking in the Spirit / to morality.

That is the **negative** definition.

So what does it mean – positively / and in our experience – to walk in the Spirit?

1. It means to know we are loved / as sons and daughters. \*\*\* Slide 8 \*\*\*  
Eph 3:17-19

*And I pray that you / being rooted and established in love,  
may have power,  
together with all the Lord's people,  
to grasp how wide and long and  
high and deep is the love of Christ,*

*19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you  
may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

What more does a child really want but to know we are loved?

Paul writes to us as a father,

*If God is for us, who can be against us?  
He who did not spare his own Son, but gave  
him up for us all—how will he not also, along  
with him, graciously give us all things?*

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God  
has chosen? It is God who justifies.  
Who then can condemn? No one.*

If God is for us, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

NO ONE!

2. It means to be led by the Spirit, like Peter in Acts 10. **\*\*\* Slide 9 \*\*\***  
Romans 8:14

*14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

Hearing God's voice is an amazing thing.  
But the lasting impression is not what was said.. but just to hear.

It's an experience of intimacy. Deep calls to deep.

It's personal in our experience.

The first time I felt the Presence of God I was 24 years old.

I was in worship with some young people.  
And suddenly I was filled with joy – I could hardly breathe.

David writes that we can even taste and see – Psalm 34.

*4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me;  
he delivered me from all my fears.  
5 Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame.*

*8 Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed are those who take refuge in him..*

3. It means to speak what we hear. Acts 2 – we are all prophets. **\*\*\* Slide 10\*\*\***  
In John 15 we read that God makes himself known to us by his Spirit.

Our job is then to speak what we hear.

1 Cor. 2: 11-13

*The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

*We have not received the spirit of the world  
but the Spirit who is from God,  
that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

*This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words  
taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities  
with Spirit-taught words.*

4. It means to be witnesses of his power. **\*\*\* Slide 11 \*\*\***  
If we have no knowledge of the power of God something is wrong.  
1 Cor. 2: 4-5

*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive  
words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,  
so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom,  
but on God's power.*

Our children need to know..

Our faith is not in words alone.

It isn't only theory.

It isn't just an old story written in books.

Our God lives!!

5. It means our life is IN Christ. Galatians 5:13-26. **\*\*\* Slide 12 \*\*\***  
The fruit of the Spirit, and not acting according to the fallen nature.

*22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,  
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness  
and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

6. It means a transformed mind. **\*\*\* Slide 13 \*\*\***  
Rom. 12:1-2

*I urge you, brothers and sisters,  
in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies  
as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to*

*God—this is true worship.*

*2Do not conform to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

7. It means we receive gifts for service in the world \*\*\* Slide 13-B\*\*\*  
1 Cor. 12

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.  
But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit  
for the common good.  
One and the same Spirit works all these things,  
Distributing TO EACH ONE individually – just as he wills.*

These gifts are the power and wisdom of the Lord  
As he moves us out into the world in mission.

To work with God – to partner with him as his children –  
Is to walk with him in service in the world.

8. It means an inner vision of God \*\*\* Slide 13-C\*\*\*  
2 Cor. 3:18 and 4:16

*18And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate  
the Lord's glory, are being transformed  
into his image with ever-increasing glory,  
which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

*16Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly  
we are wasting away,*

*yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

*17For our light and momentary troubles  
are achieving for us an eternal glory  
that far outweighs them all.*

*18So we fix our eyes not on what is seen,  
but on what is unseen,  
since what is seen is temporary,  
but what is unseen is eternal.*

Without this inner sight and inner hearing,  
Our faith seems more like a tradition than a living reality.

Our eyes have to be lifted above this world to see it clearly.

When we have been in the Presence o God everything looks different.

// \*\*\* Slide 14 \*\*\*

Are you hearing God's voice?

What prevents you from listening?

Is it fear?

Don't fear.

It is the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Why do you come to church every Sunday?

Is it to learn something new?

You can buy a book and stay home.

Is it to meet with your friends?

You can make a date for dinner.

*Have you just been dipping your toes?*

*The ocean is a scary place until you experience it.*

The Lord invites you to come in deeper.

After the benediction today we are not walking out before you.

Brad and Tina, Betty and I will remain up here.

What we want to do is invite you to come forward and let us pray for you.

If you have never felt that faith is a living reality..

If you have never experienced the personal touch of the Holy Spirit..

If you find it hard to worship God..

If you want to hear his voice...

If you are discouraged and feel like a pile of dry bones..  
come and let us pray for you..

Luke writes in chapter 11 --

Ask and it will be given to you;  
seek and you will find;  
knock and the door will be opened to you.

10For everyone who asks receives;  
those who seek find; and to those who  
knock, the door will be opened.

11“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for  
a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12Or if he  
asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13If you  
then, though you are evil, know how to give good  
gifts to your children, how much more will your  
Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those  
who ask him!”